

**Natural Resources Conservation Service
Civil Rights Performance Plan and Self-Assessment Report
Fiscal Year 2004**

Goal	Performance Objective	Indicators	Outcomes
<p>1 <u>Accountability</u>: Incorporate the USDA Civil Rights policy throughout Agency operations to ensure that customers and employees are treated fairly and equitably, with dignity and respect.</p>	<p>1.1 Hold managers, supervisors, and other employees accountable for ensuring that USDA's customers and employees are treated in accordance with USDA's Civil Rights policy.</p>	<p>1.1.1 The Agency displays commitment to USDA's Civil Rights goals in its strategic plan.</p>	<p>The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) strategic plan reflects the Chief's commitment to the Department and Agency civil rights goals by establishing specific measurable objectives and action items that will assure that all NRCS programs and services are delivered fairly and equitably and will strengthen the conservation delivery system. Action items are developed to ensure that discriminatory aspects do not exist in the delivering or performance of agency activities. The plan establishes specific outreach goals and objectives to minorities, women, and other traditionally underserved groups.</p> <p>NRCS strategic plan also includes critical initiatives that will allow NRCS to effectively recruit, manage and maintain a diverse workforce. In addition, there are actions to strengthen ties with minority serving institutions and community based organizations to meet the needs of minorities, underserved and non-traditional customers.</p> <p>The Chief of NRCS has established a zero tolerance policy that mandates for all employees, prospective employees, customers, and prospective customers that the agency provides a positive and professional work environment free from discrimination on the bases of their race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, marital or family status, political beliefs, parental status, or protected genetic information.</p>

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		<p>1.1.2 Managers' performance standards mandate actions that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> X Implement the Agency's Civil Rights program objectives, X Integrate Civil Rights principles throughout the Agency's programs and operations, and X Ensure an environment free of discrimination. 	<p>Civil Rights Advisory Committees (CRAC) and Special Emphasis Program Managers (SEPM) in each State are provided a budget to implement outreach activities, promote special events, observe special celebrations, recruit, etc.</p> <p>Annual performance appraisals for all supervisors and managers include an element evaluating them on their compliance and commitment to civil rights and Equal Employment Opportunity.</p> <p>All NRCS employees have a stand alone civil rights performance element which incorporates the Agency's civil rights policies and provides the accountability necessary to ensure that customers and employees are treated fairly and equitably. Standards for new employees are put in place within 30 days of entering duty.</p> <p>All SEPM and members of the CRAC who have civil rights as a collateral duty have their Position Descriptions modified to include civil rights collateral assignments. All collateral SEPMs and the CRAC Chairperson in each organizational unit report directly to the Deputy Equal Opportunity Officer for that unit.</p>

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		<p>1.1.3 The Agency ensures that all employees' performance standards provide for civil rights accountability.</p> <p>1.1.4 The Agency takes appropriate disciplinary or corrective action when a case file or other evidence indicates: X Discrimination, X Misconduct related to Civil Rights violations other than findings of discrimination, and reprisals.</p>	<p>NRCS Civil Rights Division (CRD) established General Manual 230, Part 402A, "Civil Rights Accountability" that requires appropriate disciplinary and/or corrective actions to be taken against those employees who engage in discriminatory behavior or civil rights related misconduct. Managers and supervisors are held accountable for failure to take appropriate action in response to any findings of discrimination, reprisal, civil rights violations, or related misconduct. When there is a finding of discrimination or misconduct, procedures are established whereby the Human Resources Division coordinates with the Chief and appropriate supervisor regarding appropriate punishment for the offender.</p> <p>All employees' performance standards provide for civil rights accountability as required under the Agency's Performance Appraisal System which is automatically generated in the Internet Computerized Automated Management System (ICAMS). Position descriptions and performance standards reflect the responsibilities of employees in carrying out civil rights compliance requirements.</p>

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2. <u>Program Delivery</u> : Ensure all customers equal access and equal treatment in the delivery of USDA programs and services.	2.1 Deliver Agency programs in compliance with Civil Rights laws and with Departmental regulations, policy, and goals.	<p>2.1.1 The Agency conducts compliance review of federally –assisted and –conducted programs in accordance with Departmental guidelines.</p> <p>2.1.2 The Agency: X Identifies deficiencies, and X Implements preventive and corrective measures to address deficiencies found as a result of compliance reviews.</p>	<p>During FY 2004, the CRD conducted Federally assisted and conducted compliance reviews in 11 States to assess NRCS’ compliance with equal opportunity laws and regulations regarding the agency’s delivery of Federally assisted and conducted programs. The States were Ohio, Minnesota, Alabama, Iowa, South Carolina, Indiana, Washington, Tennessee, Montana, Massachusetts, and Utah.</p> <p>In addition, NRCS State offices conducted 548 Federally assisted and conducted Civil Rights compliance reviews of their field offices and facilities.</p> <p>Corrective action plans to correct violations resulting from these reviews are provided to the CRD during National Headquarters conducted State compliance reviews. Updates are submitted every 90 days until all noncompliance items are corrected. Corrective action plans are monitored by the CRD and the States to ensure that deficiencies are corrected and complied with in a timely manner. Most noncompliance items are corrected on-site. In FY 2004, the Civil Rights Division received corrective action plans from all eleven States reviewed that included 193 items to be corrected. Sixty-five percent of</p>

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		<p>2.1.3 The Agency: X Conducts effective Civil Rights Impact Analyses.</p>	<p>the deficiencies have been corrected.</p> <p>NRCS conducts Civil Rights Impact Analyses (CRIA) of all new and revised Agency programs, charters, and reorganizations to identify adverse implications for minorities, women, or persons with disabilities. In addition, the Chief has directed a member of the CRD to be a core member of all taskforces engaged in conservation program development and implementation, reorganizations and other major Agency activities.</p> <p>A CRIA was conducted for the following NRCS programs and activities during FY 04:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competitive Sourcing; • Conservation Security Program (CSP) Final Rule; • Conservation Innovative Grant (CIG); • Grassland Reserve Program (GRP); • Agriculture Air Quality Task Force (AAQTF); • Technical Service Provider (TSP) Final Rule; and • NRCS/NHQ Reorganization Proposal. <p>As a result of the analyses, program changes were implemented by the Agency to mitigate potential negative impacts of conservation programs and other Agency activities for protected group members.</p>

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			<p><i>For example under CSP:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure access to NRCS programs for producers having limited resources, producers will be allowed to qualify and participate at all three tier levels of the CSP program. • NRCS is implementing provisions that would elevate limited resource farmers or ranchers to the highest part of each enrollment category for funding. • Beginning agricultural producers will be eligible for up to 90 percent of the cost of conservation practices as compared to up to 75 percent for other agricultural producers. <p>(Many producers who are women, minority or persons with disabilities meet the criteria of limited resources or beginning farmer or rancher)</p> <p><i>Under the NRCS/NHQ Reorganization Proposal:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where organizational levels were being abolished, the agency offered a position to every employee affected at the same grade level. • The agency obtained early-out authority for affected employees. • Pay retention was authorized for affected employees who voluntarily accepted lower grade positions where they were currently assigned.

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		<p>X Develops Limited English Proficiency Plans, as required.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A vendor was contracted to provide outplacement services for employees who choose to separate or apply for other jobs. <p><i>For all cost share programs:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The “buy down” practice where a producer could accept lower percentages of cost share and thus be awarded additional points and gain an advantage in the application approval process is disallowed. This practice favored the larger more affluent producers. <p>NRCS has incorporated in the Agency’s General Manual the requirement that all Federally conducted and Federally assisted programs be accessible equally to all individuals regardless of their national origin or their ability to speak and understand the English language. Communication strategies are implemented through outreach efforts to underserved communities. This includes contracting interpreted services, producing multi-language informational brochures and videos, and establishing new programs. NRCS liaisons are positioned throughout the agency to address and distribute information to local media resources in various languages, brochures, and videos.</p> <p>NRCS recognized the multilingual and multicultural needs of its customers by providing interpretive services, producing</p>

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			<p>communications materials, such as multilingual publications, specifically targeted to reach underserved Limited English Proficiency groups. <i>For example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRCS updated its Web site to ensure that information on NRCS programs, resources, and technologies are accessible in Spanish (En Espanola) and comply with Section 508 requirements. • The Outreach Division is developing an agency-wide policy that mirrors Executive Order 13166, "Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency." The Division has developed an Agency fact sheet and brochure on LEP. • General Manual 230, Part 405 provides policy guidance for implementing LEP requirements throughout the agency. • The Deputy Chief for Programs updated the Spanish Farmland and Ranch Protection Program fact sheet to meet the needs of our Spanish speaking clients. • The Human Resource Division (HRD) translated recruitment brochures and recruitment posters into Spanish for job fairs, colleges and universities with strong agricultural programs and diverse student populations. HRD prepared recruitment materials in Braille, large print and on cassette tapes, for people with disabilities. • Twelve news releases were distributed to field offices on USDA

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			<p>programs. Each news release was translated into Spanish and distributed to the Hispanic media markets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Georgia targets Hispanics: Three informational sessions were offered and provided entirely in Spanish for the second-time ever at an informational workshop. • An Asian American Indiana NRCS District Conservationist traveled to Arkansas to assist the Arkansas NRCS staff conduct informational meetings to discuss the benefits of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) for a group of over 300 Laotians and other farmers of Asian descent. • An Environmental Protection Agency grant was secured to print NRCS and the University of Missouri Water Quality Guide Sheets in English and Spanish to improve adult education of the increasing population of Hispanic people working in rural southwest Missouri. The Hispanic Emphasis Program Manager is working with the University of Missouri Outreach and Extension staff to develop and deliver presentations on USDA programs to Hispanic farmers and communities. • Colorado published a Spanish/English handbook for ranchers. • “<i>Conservation Programs in Your Watershed</i>,” a campaign developed by California NRCS, described all programs and technical assistance offered by our agency; publications were translated into Spanish and Hmong and distributed statewide (as well as requested by other states).

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Montana has completed a limit English Proficiency survey to determine levels of English proficiency that may impact potentially eligible clients on American Indian reservations and with the Hmong community in Missoula. • Idaho produced a video for Hispanic cooperators and Hispanic irrigators on proper pesticide use. • Fresno/Central Valley California (Area 3) NRCS staff members hosted a weekly conservation awareness and question and answer radio program in Cambodian, Laotian and Hmong languages that reaches approximately 10,000 listeners. Total target population in the area is close to 45,000. Call-in responses often result in future community projects and individual conservation planning. • Kentucky is working with the Catholic Diocese of Lexington, Kentucky to have information relating to conservation conferences and programs translated into Spanish for an increasing Hispanic population that are farm workers. • The NRCS office in Culpepper, Virginia and the Soil and Water Conservation District produced a Spanish language video discussing USDA agencies and their programs that was broadcasted on an Hispanic cable station. • Pennsylvania translated a CREP plan into Spanish so an Hispanic owner operator could use the plan effectively. • A Conservation Security Program listening session was held in Rosemount, Minnesota for Hmong producers in the state. NRCS used the services of an interpreter to assist with

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			explaining the program to the Hmong producers.
	2.2 Maintain an effective process for handling Civil Rights program complaints.	<p>2.2.1 The Agency promptly implements preventive and corrective actions resulting from complaint findings.</p> <p>2.2.2 The Agency promptly implements terms of conciliation agreements.</p> <p>2.2.3 The Agency analyzes trends in complaints promptly implementing changes to avoid future complaints and ensure nondiscrimination.</p>	<p>A zero tolerance policy combined with clear performance expectations and substantive training and awareness tools have effectively deterred discriminatory conduct within the Agency.</p> <p>There has been no finding of discrimination or evidence of Civil Rights violations related to program delivery for the fiscal year.</p> <p>Conciliation agreements are monitored for implementation within the required timeframe. Once the implementation is complete and the complainant is notified <u>and</u> a letter is provided to the responsible agency closing the case. For FY 2004 the Agency entered into one conciliation agreement.</p> <p>Quarterly reports are generated and analyzed identifying patterns of possible discriminatory actions in each State. If a pattern is identified and there is an appearance of discrimination, a meeting is conducted that may result in an investigation, compliance review and/or discussion with State officials reviewing and providing corrective</p>

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			measures to ensure equality.
	2.3 Improve service delivery to historically underserved populations.	2.3.1 The Agency: X Creates mechanisms to improve service to underserved populations X Establishes specific goals, and X Identifies new priorities and accomplishments.	<p>NRCS has set a performance goal that by FY 2008, 467,000 members of minority, underserved, and nontraditional groups will receive NRCS conservation assistance annually to help them plan and apply conservation on their lands and the lands that they manage.</p> <p>NRCS engages in data collection to analyze the actual or potential impacts its programs may have on members of protected groups. Conclusions drawn from various analyses enable program managers to provide targeted outreach efforts in an attempt to mitigate any adverse impacts.</p> <p>Overall Program Participation Rates for Eligible Producers are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 14% White Male Producers ➤ 12% Black Producers ➤ 10% Hispanic Producers ➤ 12% Asian Pacific Islander Producers ➤ 16% American Indian Producers ➤ 16% Female Producers <p>For Fiscal Year 2003 (Data for FY 2004 will be not be available until after November 1, 2004), females and American Indian producers received services from NRCS at rates exceeding the rate of service provided to White males (14 percent). NRCS provided services to 16</p>

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			<p>percent of eligible American Indian producers, 12 percent of eligible Asian American/Pacific Islander producers, 12 percent of eligible Black producers, 10 percent of eligible Hispanic producers, and 16 percent of eligible female producers. There is no disparity in the services rendered by NRCS to White males as compared to females and all minority groups. Parity is achieved when services provided by NRCS to a protected group is at a rate of 10 percent or less of the rate of services provided to White males.</p> <p><u>Application Approval Rates for NRCS Cost Share Payments</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 30% White Male Applicants ➤ 55% Black Applicants ➤ 52% Hispanic Applicants ➤ 49% Asian Applicants ➤ 32% Hawaiian/PI Applicants ➤ 49% American Indian Applicants ➤ 52% Female Applicants <p>The application approval rates for cost share payments for all protected group producers equal or exceeds the application approval rate for White males producers (30 percent).</p> <p><u>Percentage of Cost Share Payments Received by Producers</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 94.67% White Producers (94.84%) ➤ 0.82% Black Producers (1.33%) ➤ 1.76% Hispanic Producers (2.32%)

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 1.08% Asian American Producers (0.39%) ➤ 0.02% Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Producers (0.04%) ➤ 1.65% American Indian Producers (0.71%) ➤ 10.94% Female Producers (11.08%) <p>The data above shows that White producers received 94.67 percent of all NRCS cost share payments while they represent 94.84 percent of all eligible producers. Black producers received 0.82 percent of all NRCS cost share payments and they represent 1.33 percent of eligible producers. Hispanic producers received 1.76 percent of NRCS cost share payments and they represent 2.32 percent of eligible producers. Asian American producers received 1.76 percent of NRCS cost share payments and they represent 0.39 percent of eligible producers. Hawaiian Native and Pacific Islander producers received 0.02 percent of NRCS cost share payments and they represent 0.04 percent of eligible producers. American Indian producers received 1.65 percent of NRCS cost share payments and they represent 0.71 percent of eligible producers. Female producers received 10.94 percent of NRCS cost share payments and they represent 11.08 percent of eligible producers. American Indians and Asian American/Pacific Islander producers received cost share dollars at rates exceeding their percentage of total eligible producers participating in NRCS programs.</p> <p>Revisions to NRCS' conservation programs including an increase of cost share payments from a maximum of 75 percent to up to 90</p>

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		<p>2.3.2 The Agency:</p> <p>X Identifies barriers to participation for underserved groups</p> <p>X Takes affirmative steps to remove barriers, and increases program participation and service delivery.</p>	<p>percent of contract cost for limited resource farmers effective beginning in FY 2003 increased minority producers' ability to participate. Therefore, NRCS anticipates an increase in participation and the award of cost share payment to minority and female producers to be reflected in FY 2004 data.</p> <p>To remove barriers to participation for underserved groups to achieve NRCS established performance goals, NRCS has:</p> <p><u>Increased program flexibility and sought new authorities to allow innovative strategies using existing authorities to reach historically underserved landowners and land managers. For example,</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRCS drafted a revised Emergency Watershed Program (EWP) rule (currently routed for approval) to include a provision to provide up to 90 percent financial assistance for limited resource (income) areas/clients. Limited resource areas are based upon U.S. Census information and identified by county. The proposed revision will allow State Conservationist's to make "local" determinations for communities in counties not listed as limited resource areas. • Drafted a new EWP Manual (currently, Part 509 of the National Watershed Manual is the policy for the EWP program). The draft document reflects the cost-share rate change--to provide up to 90 percent federal cost-share for limited resource areas. EWP training workshops are being

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			<p>developed which will include the revisions regarding the cost-share rate for limited resource areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CRD and the Deputy for Programs staff members reviewed EQIP and CSP National policy guidance to determine if any negative impact, barriers, and/or other obstacles exist that may discourage limited resource and/or minority farmers from participating in these programs. Currently, beginning and limited resource farmers can receive up to 90 percent cost-share rates for the installation of conservation practices through EQIP. (The maximum cost-share rate for other producers is 75 percent.) Under CSP, limited resource farmers were elevated to the highest subcategory. • The Deputy for Programs staff provided leadership in implementing and utilizing the “Regional Equity” provision of the 2002 Farm Bill in order to maximize benefits for small and limited resource farmers. • The Deputy for Programs staff provided leadership to limit maximum EQIP cost-share rates to make more funds available for small and limited resource farmers. • NRCS issued National guidance to ensure that the EQIP ranking process will not give preferential treatment to applications based on the size of the operation. The guidance stated: “The ranking criteria will be size and class neutral and (the State Conservationists) will avoid criteria that may cause a bias for or against any individual group or size of operation.” • NRCS devised a strategy to successfully allocate approximately

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			<p>\$50 million of EQIP funds to address the conservation needs of limited resource farmers and ranchers. More than 1700 EQIP contracts, covering over 1.7 million acres, were signed with limited resource farmers and ranchers in FY-03. Seventy-three percent of applications submitted by limited resource farmers and ranchers were approved. (The overall EQIP application approval rate was twenty-nine percent.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRCS implemented the new Conservation Innovative Grants (CIG) program— targeting 10 percent (\$1.5 million) of the \$15 million in funding for limited resource farmers, ranchers and Indian Tribes. The purpose of the program is to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative technologies and approaches in conjunction with agricultural production. Grants are up to 50 percent of the total project cost. An exception allows for beginning and limited resource farmers and ranchers, tribes, and community-based organizations representing these groups to derive up to 75 percent of their CIG project matching funds from in-kind contributions. • The Chief established a diverse nationwide team to provide policy recommendations on improving the EQIP to more effectively distribute \$1 billion in EQIP funding in FY-05. Special emphasis on the needs of female, minority, and limited resource farmers has been included in the charge to the team. • The EQIP statutory language focuses on providing contracts and payment on private lands to individuals or entities. The language in the statute limits EQIP payment to \$450,000

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			<p>through fiscal year 2007. These provisions are barriers to participation of tribal members. NRCS has proposed legislative changes that would correct these problems and accommodate tribal participation in EQIP. The proposals would expressly permit alternative funding arrangements with tribes, outside of the standard practice of entering into separate contracts with individual producers or entities. The changes would also exempt tribal governments from the payment limitation. These changes are appropriate steps toward increasing the availability of USDA programs and services to Native Americans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maine's ranking criteria for program participation is size neutral, giving small farms the same consideration and opportunities to earn ranking points as larger farms are given. Applicants for programs compete only against local projects that are similar to their own. • South Dakota provided earmark funds under EQIP to American Indian producers in proportion to the amount of Indian/Non-Indian lands in South Dakota. The Tribal Advisory Committee developed an EQIP American Indian Earmark Local Evaluation Worksheet. <p><u>Worked with tribal governments to establish offices and assistance delivery approaches that meets their needs. For example:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Animal Husbandry and Clean Water Programs Division

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			<p>(AHCWP) ensured inclusion of a NRCS district conservationist of American Indian origin (Navajo Tribe) in the planning session for a field-level animal husbandry training program — making sure that employees will know about the systems employed by Southwest American Indian shepherds.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Resource Economics and Social Sciences Division (RESSD) provided technical resources to develop and deliver <i>Consultation with American Indian Governments</i> training course to state and field staffs in Arizona. • RESSD provided technical resources to conduct a survey and co-authored "Evaluating Resource Needs of Native American Tribal Governments in the Midwest Region." • NRCS initiated outreach and program activities that resulted in the allocation of approximately \$24 million of FY-04 EQIP cost-share funding for Native Americans. • NRCS clarified National EQIP guidance to illustrate opportunities for Tribal members to participate in the program. Legislative remedies to barriers that were identified for Tribes and Tribal members in the EQIP statutes are being pursued. • Arizona NRCS insured that FY 2002 Farm Bill programs were widely available to American Indian nations. Forty percent of contracts developed under Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) were American Indian contracts. Twenty percent of total EQIP funds (100 percent of all applicants) were obligated

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			<p>to American Indians. Also, two Technical Service Provider (TSP) agreements specific to the White Mountain Apache Nation lands were established.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRCS facilitated implementation of a Congressional earmark and provided \$275,000 for a cooperative agreement with the Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Committee for conservation and sustainable agriculture activities. • NRCS protected 30 farms containing historical and archaeological resources, totaling over 8,000 acres, by permanent easements with the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP). Some of the farms contained historical tribal features. • In Nebraska, each 1994 Land Grant Institution (Tribal Colleges) has been notified of the opportunities available through the Technical Service Provider (TSP) process. Two colleges have expressed an interest in furthering their academic programs to meet the TSP requirements. Meetings to discuss curriculum and TSP requirements are being planned. • Nebraska continues to allocate EQIP funds to each reservation in the State to meet identified resource concerns. • To date, EQIP has been used by producers on North Dakota's four major reservations to contract a total of 474,677 acres. A total of 298,456 acres of trust land has been contracted equating to thirty-five percent (298,456/855,082) of the total land in North Dakota held in trust. The total dollars expended

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			<p>on EQIP contracts on the reservations is \$4,728,501.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D worked with volunteer fire departments in three towns within the Omaha Indian Reservation, one covering a portion of the Winnebago Indian Reservation, and another covering a portion of the Omaha Indian Reservation to prepare grant applications for needed fire equipment. Grant applications were for a total of \$138,603. To date, two grant applications have been approved and another pending for a total of \$62,429. • Oklahoma obligated 10 percent (\$1,941,070) of FY 04 EQIP funds to Native American Tribes and underserved communities to increase Farm Bill Program participation. • Oklahoma has established agreements with the Creek, Choctaw, Osage, Chickasha, and Cherokee Tribal Nations to allow the NRCS a Tribal Conservationist Office at their headquarters. These Tribal Conservationists work directly with the Tribes to provide outreach, and conservation planning and technical assistance to Tribal Members. • NRCS established EQIP allocations for the identified Native American Tribes in Florida. The monies are used to fund EQIP applications filed within the local counties. • Soil Survey Division (SSD) continued Soil Survey Initiatives on Tribal Lands with \$1.3 million in funds to Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, New York , Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming; expect to exceed FY 03 mapping accomplishments of 1,285,500 acres (completed approximately 1,037,800 acres through the

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			<p>3rd Quarter of FY 04).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SSD completed four Regional NRCS conferences, which included participation from 1890 Universities, Land Grant Universities, Tribal participants, private sector, and other Federal agencies. • SSD estimate about 22 Digital Soil Surveys with significant amounts (1,000 acres or more) of Tribal Lands for FY 04; 17 have been completed through the 3rd quarter of FY 04 - three are entirely Native American Lands (Arizona's Colorado Indian Reservation, Utah's San Juan County Navajo Reservation, and Washington's Yakima Indian Reservation). • The Soil Survey Division estimate for FY 04 about 10 Soil Survey Publications with significant amounts (1,000 acres or more) of Tribal Lands; 7 have been completed through the 3rd quarter of FY 04 (New Mexico Shiprock Area is entirely Native American Lands). • Ecological Science Division (ESD) and the Louisiana Plant Materials Center (PMC) assisted the Gena Bank Choctaw Indian Tribe to establish the use of a superior rivercance (Arundinaria gigantea) for cultural crafts and for riparian restoration. • NRCS executed a cooperative agreement with the Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) comprised of American Indian Tribes in the Southeast, South Central, Northern Plains, West, and Midwest regions of the country. Tribal producers are made aware of NRCS programs and services available, and are

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			<p>given assistance to complete the proper forms for obtaining services. Surveys were distributed during outreach meetings with the IAC in an effort to document any barriers that may preclude Tribes from having full participation in NRCS programs and services. During the annual IAC national symposium, a workshop on the “Barriers to American Indian Participation in NRCS Programs and Services” was conducted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRCS conducted forums to provide information about NRCS programs and services at two American Indian Reservations; the Pueblo Center in Albuquerque, New Mexico and the Salish Kootenai Reservation in Montana. • In Nebraska, the AiKiRuti Healing Garden will be a welcome center, an educational center, and a garden for growing culturally significant plants. The plants will be harvested and used for treatment of drug and alcohol abuse patients. The Ho-Chunk or native language of the Winnebago People will be taught at the Welcome Center. This is an estimated \$750,000 project overall. • Oklahoma funded an agreement with the Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (OTCAC) to assist the NRCS with identifying and providing outreach to Native American Tribes and individuals; to assist the Oklahoma Landowners and Tenants Association (TOLTA) to provide outreach to underserved communities and individuals; and assist the Retired Educators for Youth Agriculture Programs to recruit

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			<p>underserved youth into the field of agriculture.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The State Conservationist in Maine and the Chief of the Penobscot Tribe signed a cultural resources protocol agreement in 2004. • Wisconsin engineers provided training to the Ho-Chunk staff at the Black River Falls headquarters. • The Plant Materials Program in Georgia is partnered with the Ho-Chunk Tribal staff in NRCS sponsored technical training events during FY 04. \$200,000 of EQIP funds were specifically earmarked for tribal lands to increase outreach and improve service delivery. For example, the Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center increased rare corn seed that was in limited supply as a source of food and seed to increase the supply for use by other Tribes. • The Tribal Liaison for the Cherokee Indians in North Carolina has been working with the Tribal Organic Gardening Program and the Composting Program to secure funding for equipment to compost fish mortality by-products and fecal material into their regular organic matter thereby accomplishing three goals: 1) increase the nutrient level of the compost; 2) minimize a public health problem; and 3) improve the water quality in the nearby stream. • A two-day American Indian Tribal Summit, held by NRCS in Sacramento, provided a forum for representatives from seventeen tribes from throughout California to ask questions and work with their appropriate Area supervisors.

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			<p>Subsequent meetings and follow up technical assistance have been held with over 12 tribes statewide.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Jersey supported the Salem County Native American POW WOW in providing NRCS conservation program information to over 1,000 attendees, most of which were Native Americans. • West Virginia Plant Materials Center provided plant materials support to the Eastern Cherokee Nation. The Center sent ramps and “Gobbler” Sawtooth Oak to be grown for agro-forestry. NRCS initiated a training program to assist the Cherokee Nation in the development of a tribal plant materials program. • Nevada helped organize and participated in the Nevada Indian Agricultural and Environmental Summit to provide programmatic information to the general public regarding NRCS programs and how to access technical assistance for conservation planning and practice implementation. • Utah is implementing a Coordinated Resource Management Plan with the Goshute and Ute Tribes on a 300,000 acre watershed. • Idaho NRCS earmarked \$200,000 of EQIP funds specifically for tribal lands. • New York is working with the Tonawanda and Tuscarora Indian Nations on projects to include soil surveys, grassland restoration, completing soil monoliths, and the writing of Geological Information System metadata.

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Goal	Performance Objective	Indicators	Outcomes
		<p>2.3.3 The Agency increases outreach and improves service delivery to underserved populations with:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">X Outside groups,</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">X Minority-serving institutions, and</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">X Community-based organizations.</p>	<p>In FY 2004, to increase access to NRCS programs, NRCS allocated 1.4 million dollars to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1980 institutions • Minority producers organizations • The National Council for Science and the Environment • Small and limited resource farmer outreach sessions <p><u>NRCS Provided effective outreach to nontraditional customers and underserved communities by providing appropriate information, materials and conservation solutions. <i>For example,</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Deputy Chief for Programs provided information on conservation programs to small farmers at the 1st Annual National Texas-Mexico Border Coalition Conference for Hispanic Farmers and Ranchers. • NRCS presented Hispanic farmers and workers with information on the 2002 Farm Bill and NRCS conservation programs at the Hispanic Farmers/Farm Workers Outreach Workshop in Florida. • Kansas is working with a Rural Sociologist to implement a pilot outreach effort to Hispanic and Latinos in Southwest Kansas, the area of the state that has seen the most dramatic population increase in those groups. The pilot will focus on

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			<p>identifying local Hispanic/Latino and non-Hispanic leaders and initiating listening sessions to better understand the community NRCS is trying to reach. The short term goal will be to create an awareness of USDA programs and opportunities, and to implement on measurable NRCS project. The long term goal is to develop a future customer base for conservation and conservation programs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2003, Nebraska listened to the Hispanic Community in the Norfolk, Nebraska area and learned that they wanted technical assistance for developing a community garden. In 2004, they used an Hispanic Student Career Experience Program student in engineering to design an irrigation system. NRCS is currently working through the Prairie Land RC&D to search for grants to help pay for the system. NRCS in Nebraska is also currently pursuing the hiring of an Hispanic student with a bi-lingual requirement to help provide outreach assistance to Hispanic communities in northeast Nebraska for the community garden and additional outreach projects. • ESD worked with the Hispanic communities by providing information on irrigated pastures and the selection of plants for riparian restoration. • New Mexico completed the Hackberry Draw Watershed Rehabilitation Projects in New Mexico, which provided flood protection to a large minority population near Carlsbad, New Mexico. • Colorado conducted a workshop with the San Luis Valley

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Goal	Performance Objective	Indicators	Outcomes
			<p>limited resources and Hispanic producers targeting Acequias.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pennsylvania outreached to the farm community in the mushroom growing area of Chester County where migrant workers are transitioning to owners and operators of mushroom farms. • The Umatilla Watershed in Eastern Oregon was chosen as one of 18 watersheds nationwide to participate in the new Conservation Security Program. During the sign-up, NRCS created a marketing plan to reach Hispanic and American Indian audiences. Flyers were posted at businesses frequented by Hispanics and American Indians. News releases were sent to Hispanic radio stations and newspapers and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation newspaper. Informational meetings were held on the reservation and in Hermiston where the largest portion of the Hispanic population lives. • Fresno/Central Valley (Area 3) NRCS employees were instrumental in forming and continue to serve as advisors to the Black Farmers Association – a major voice in growing and marketing ethnic specialty crops. Their expertise and experience has reached as far as the San Francisco Market program bringing together urban and rural audiences. • Missouri State Outreach Coordinator initiated an effort to inform rural physicians about AgrAbility and the potential benefits for their patients and communities. • The Outreach coordinator prepared “The Meeting Facilitator”

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			<p>a news article about gardening while overcoming disabilities, and posted a reminder for the State about the AgrAbility program for farmers with disabilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deputy Chief for Programs provided training on conservation programs and small farm issues to disabled farmers and ranchers at the National AgrAbility Project Training Workshop. • Deputy for Programs presented Hispanic farmers and workers with information on the 2002 Farm Bill and NRCS conservation programs at the Hispanic Farmers/Farm Workers Outreach Workshop in Florida. • NRCS California is working with the African American Food Association in Southern California to develop demonstration sites and field trials to show soil quality, land management practices and sustainability to targeted urban farmers. • The Deputy Chief for Programs improved the “State of the Land” Web site to comply with Section 508 requirements in order to ensure that analysis products are accessible to people with disabilities. • Pennsylvania entered into an agreement with a minority company, Keystone Economic Development Corporation, to locate minority farmers. • NRCS created and distributed an estate planning guidebook for limited resource and minority farmers that details strategies for protecting agricultural land. The work was done in cooperation with the American Farmland Trust.

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Goal	Performance Objective	Indicators	Outcomes
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chief presented and actively participated in the USDA-Stakeholders Working Meeting on Program Equality (April 15, 2004 in Washington, DC). More than 35 organizations representing limited resource and minority farmers and other organizations, such as the Rural Coalition, Intertribal Agriculture Council, Federation of Southern Cooperatives, Hmong American Community, Black Farmers and Agriculturalists Association, United Farmers Organization, Women's Food and Agriculture Network, Hispanic Farmers Association, National Black Farmers Association, etc. participated in the event. • ESD provided Silvo pasture training workshops in Alabama and Mississippi utilizing goats as the host animal for this practice. Goat owners are largely minorities of the two hosted states. • Minnesota assisted Asian farmers in setting up watering systems for an alternative crops demonstration project. The EQIP Program Manager and State Outreach Coordinator are reviewing the EQIP process to include alternative crops. • New Jersey established 25 wildlife habitat demonstration sites in Atlantic City that involved African American and Hispanic Youths. • Louisiana and conservation district personnel worked with a female owned and operated "Fast" Food Farm in Gramercy, Louisiana, that educates young people about where their "fast" food comes from and what kind of work goes into the

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			<p>production of food. There have been a total of 30 field trips to the farm since October 2003 resulting in over 1,508 students receiving information about the environment and food production. Approximately 70 percent of the students were minorities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Georgia allocated \$982,000 in EQIP funds for financial and technical assistance to limited resource and underserved customers. • Connecticut conducted workshops in New London and Tolland Counties to encourage Spanish speaking farmers to apply for farm bill programs. NRCS used Spanish speaking employees to visit churches and civic organizations in the area. • Ten percent of New York EQIP allocation was set aside for Limited Resource farmers and cost share rates are set for 90 percent. <p><u>Strengthen ties with minority serving academic institutions. For example,</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nebraska NRCS assisted Nebraska Indian Community College Plant in the identification of soils information and reference material for training purposes; and with specific site information such as soils, infiltration rates, etc., for grant applications as requested. • Group project with Northeast Nebraska RC&D, Niobrara

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			<p>State Park Nebraska Indian Community College, Ponca Tribe of Nebraska, Santee Nation, Nebraska Game & Parks Commission, National Park Service to produce and distribute an educational brochure and place in traveler information outlets. Brochure highlights Medicine Wheel established at Niobrara State Park. The Wheel is an on-going project of the group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arizona entered into a grant agreement with the Institute of integrated Rural Development within Dine College. The agreement includes the development of a strategic plan whereby students may complete credits in agriculture, natural resources, environmental, or related application through project work that provides educational credits through the successful completion of field-based experience with NRCS. Dine College will also develop a plan to promote the NRCS Tribal Scholar's Program and other strategies to recruit students for NRCS employment. • Georgia is one of the partners of a collaborative effort with Fort Valley State University on a \$200,000 proposal. The project title is "Sustaining the Small and Limited Resource Family Farm: A Collaborative Network Approach to Educational Training." NRCS will assist Fort Valley State University in their efforts to execute this project. • Resource Inventory and Assessment Division (RIAD) worked with Lincoln University (Jefferson City, Missouri) and the NRCS Outreach Division to define future direction and

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Goal	Performance Objective	Indicators	Outcomes
			<p>possible deliverables for GIS Centers of Excellence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SSD provided educational materials to 1890 Schools (North Carolina State A&T University, Alabama A&M University, and Tuskegee University). • The SSD continued support for the Soil Science Scholar Placement program, primarily for minority students. Six students attending four universities participated in the program for FY 2004. The universities are Alabama A&M University, the University of Georgia, Tennessee State University, and Virginia State University • NRCS participated in the 2004 Collaborative Water Quality Workshop with the 1862, 1890, and 1994 Universities, providing information on the “Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002” (2002 Farm Bill) in Atlanta, Georgia. • NRCS strongly supports the USDA 1890 Task Force’s Centers of Excellence Program. For 2004, NRCS partnered with five 1890 Institutions in the following Centers of Excellence to train and develop students and partners (\$980,000): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Geographical Information Systems (GIS), Lincoln University; ➤ Plants and Water Quality, Virginia State University; ➤ Grasslands center, Langston University; ➤ Water Quality, Florida A&M University; and ➤ Environmental Science Center. South Carolina State University.

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Goal	Performance Objective	Indicators	Outcomes
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRCS personnel worked with Grambling State University and the Mayor of the Town of Grambling to begin recycling efforts. • Virginia maintains a staff position at Virginia State University to work with the faculty and to provide NRCS exposure to students and deliver GIS technology to the classroom. • The Caribbean Area provides technical support to the conservation course offered at the Puerto Rico-Mayaguez Campus and participates in the University's Natural Resources Committee. • NRCS personnel in Louisiana joined with Southern University (Louisiana's 1890 University) to conduct specific outreach campaigns, meetings and workshops. • Maryland is working with the University of Maryland Eastern Shore University, an 1890 University, to develop and fund a proposal to build capacity for minorities to become TSP. <p><u>Broadened and strengthened the conservation partnership. <i>For example:</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRCS held an informational meeting in Oglethorpe County to provide information to small landowners about NRCS programs and services. The Broad River Soil & Water Conservation District and the Concerned Black Men of Oglethorpe County sponsored this meeting.

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRCS worked with the African American Farmers Association Southeast Region Beef Cattle organization on a demonstration project in Eatonton, Georgia that utilize EQIP funding to teach small landowners in the southeast about rotational grazing, beef production, and marketing of beef. • A Small Farmers Resource Information meeting was held on May 6, 2004, in Dublin, Georgia in partnership with Fort Valley State University and the Georgia Forestry Commission. • Approximately 500 minority landowners were reached by workshops that were held in conjunction with the Arkansas Farm and Land Development Corporation (ALFDC) Annual Conference, the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB) Rural Life Conference, and the USDA 2501 Program. The main purpose of the workshops was to educate landowners and producers about USDA/NRCS programs. • RESSD provided technical support and influence to the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) resulting in a cooperative agreement for a nation-wide workshop on increasing diversity wherein National Association Conservation Districts (NACD) national executive team and some State-level Soil and Water Conservation District Boards have participated. • The South Dakota State Conservationist established a Tribal Advisory Committee to serve as a subcommittee to the State Technical Committee. • The State Conservationist and Outreach Coordinator in

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			<p>Georgia addressed a NAACP State convention and provided the audience with information on NRCS programs and services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Maryland NRCS and Southern Maryland RC&D Council are coordinating with the 1890 Extension Program in assisting with the implementation of the USDA 2501 Small Farmer Program in Southern Maryland. They are also working to identify potential farmer markets for marketing products from small farmers, participating in outreach training programs, identifying alternative income opportunities, and making available NRCS technical assistance to those who may otherwise not be aware of USDA and non-USDA programs. <p>The NRCS Outreach Division is in the process of drafting agency guidelines for conducting quarterly national program outreach reviews, along with providing states with review guidelines. The review guidelines are 75 percent complete.</p> <p>The NRCS Outreach Division is participating with the agency's Civil Rights Division on a coordinated-effort in conducting outreach reviews in Massachusetts, Utah, Oregon and South Carolina. The pilot instrument used will focus on performance in outreach using between 10-15 questions for employees and customers.</p> <p>The NRCS Outreach Division coordinated on a monthly basis with</p>

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			<p>the Regional Outreach Coordinators to provide advice in counsel to improve service to underserved communities.</p> <p>The NRCS Outreach Division works closely with the agency's national American Indian Liaison and the National Small Farms Coordinator on various departmental and agency initiatives in a coordinated-effort to improve the effectiveness of services and awareness to the underserved populations.</p> <p>The NRCS Outreach Division participates on several USDA outreach initiatives that involve improvements to underserved populations, in addition to developing new priorities, i.e. the USDA Black Farmer's Summit Planning Team, the USDA NAACP Work Group and the USDA Outreach Coordinators Committee.</p> <p>In a better effort to provide awareness through E-Government, the NRCS Outreach Division has taken the initiative to coordinate with the Management Services Division to use Outreach's customer database to distribute pamphlets, posters and program information to the underserved communities. This effort will increase the Division's distribution efforts by 80 percent.</p> <p>The NRCS provided \$50,000 towards various Hispanic Serving Institutions for support of student tuition, room and board and other fees.</p>

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			<p>The NRCS provided \$7,500 towards the USDA-initiated annual NAACP conference. The NRCS Outreach Division participated and provided staff support in the distribution of 500 agency program packages, including program fact sheets and outreach coordinator contacts. This effort provided agency awareness to over 5,000 conference participants.</p> <p>NRCS participated with, provided financial and technical assistance, and conducted research with minority employee organizations, community based organizations and minority-serving institutions that serve together with NRCS as partners to increase program outreach efforts, to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) ➤ Minorities in Agriculture Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS) ➤ American Indian Higher Education Council (AIHEC) ➤ 1890, 1994, APA and Hispanic Serving Institutes in implementation of the NRCS Scholars programs ➤ National Organization of Black County Officials ➤ Rural Coalition ➤ Federation of Southern Cooperatives ➤ Risk Management Agency Outreach Panel ➤ National Council for Science and the Environment ➤ Professional Agricultural Worker's Conference ➤ Advisory Board Member ➤ Agency recognized Employee Organizations

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			<p>NRCS provided outreach priorities and effective guidelines relating to agency program participation at the Southeast Regional Tribal meeting in Philadelphia, MS. The meeting was held on the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Reservation with approximately 250 registered customers.</p> <p>NRCS participated in a Tri-State (Georgia, Florida, and Alabama) Small Limited Resource Farmer Conference in Cedar Springs, Georgia. Provided agency program information to approximately 36 participates.</p> <p>NRCS participated in the 1st National Hispanic Farmers Conference held in San Antonio, TX. The Agency provided an outreach exhibit that attracted 60 potential clients, participated in the planning and implementation of the conference and provided \$25,000 in support of the conference with approximately 200 registered participants.</p> <p>NRCS participated on a panel and the Director of the CRD provided information in a presentation on agency programs and Farm Bill legislation to approximately 45 individuals at the Tuskegee Black Farmers Conference.</p> <p>NRCS was represented at the 1st USDA Stake-holder's Working meeting on Program Equity held in Washington, D.C., that was</p>

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			<p>coordinated through the office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights. NRCS employees provided an overview of agency programs to approximately 100 participants representing various tribal nations, government and non-government entities, community based organizations and others.</p> <p>The NRCS Outreach Division is a key representative of USDA's Inter-Agency partnership effort with the Marriott Hotels International Corporation. NRCS is a team member of the Departments planning team in creating a Center for Minority Farmers.</p> <p>NRCS continues to be a lead agency in utilizing the USDA/1890 Scholars Program as a recruitment mechanism. NRCS selected five new scholars who will begin school in the Fall, 2004.</p> <p>NRCS currently has a total of 23 USDA 1890 Scholars and interns.</p> <p>NRCS selected from the new pilot Scholars programs five Asian American/Pacific Islander and five American Indian Tribal students.</p> <p>The NRCS Soil Science Scholars Program is a success. NRCS has contributed and supported approximately \$500,000 towards scholarships, salaries, tuition, books and fees. There has been a \$50,000 increase towards this effort for FY 2004.</p>

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			<p>NRCS contributed \$15,000 in support of the annual Minorities in Agriculture National Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS) conference held in Des Moines, Iowa. The Outreach Division also provided program and career information through the National Outreach display and exhibit.</p> <p>NRCS is represented on the National Partnership Diversity Task Force and Stewardship Committee with the National Association of Conservation Districts.</p> <p>The Hispanic Public Service Scholars (PSS) Program was launched by the Department in early spring 2002. To date, NRCS currently have a total of nine students in the PSS Program attending schools in California, Puerto Rico, New Mexico and Florida. Summer employment locations are Georgia, Louisiana, Iowa, Oregon, West Virginia, Tennessee, Massachusetts, Michigan and Maryland.</p> <p>NRCS supported and mentored four Native American Interns through the Washington Internship for Native Students (WINS) program. Beginning this year, five four-year scholarships will be made available to American Indian students to attend a college or university of their choice.</p> <p>SPPD participated in the Washington Internships for Native</p>

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			<p>Students, WINS, by hosting an intern.</p> <p>The International Programs Division selected a female for the Embassy Fellows Program.</p> <p>In 2004, NRCS participated in the USDA Scholars Programs funding 20 new scholarships at a commitment of over \$900,000 for the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 1890 Land Grant Institutions ➤ Hispanic Serving Institutions <p>Deputy Chief for Programs sponsored and recruited eleven students for participation in the 9th Annual National Hispanic Sustainable Energy & Environmental Conference.</p> <p>The SSD supported the Soil Science Scholar Placement program, primarily for minority students. Six Students attending four universities participated in the program for FY 2004. Universities are Alabama A&M, University of Georgia, Tennessee State University, and Virginia state university.</p> <p>The SSD provided training opportunities in soils for African-American female Student Intern under the Secretary's Intern Program.</p> <p>Resource Inventory and Assessment Division (RIAD) offered a</p>

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			GIS internship to a recent college graduate with a severe targeted disability.
3 <u>Employment.</u> Provide a workplace free of discrimination and enhance the diversity of the workforce.	3.1 Take affirmative steps to recruit, hire, train, and promote employees from diverse backgrounds	3.1.1 The Agency uses Federally-mandated plans to: A. assess under-Representation B. target improvement, And C. develop and implement effective strategies for improving diversity.	<p>The FY 2005 President's Budget submitted by NRCS included several sections of the explanatory notes highlighting NRCS civil rights and equal employment opportunity accomplishments and agency initiatives, including specific outreach to underserved populations, recruitment and outreach to Black, Hispanic and American Indian colleges and universities to enhance the diversity of future workforce and initiatives to implement provisions of the 2002 Farm Bill related to limited resource and beginning farmers and ranchers.</p> <p>During FY 2003, NRCS permanent work force (full and part-time) grew by 160 employees, increasing 11,827 to 11,987.</p> <p>Among the number of NRCS women and minorities employees, White females increased by 88, Hispanic males increased by 29, Asian American/Pacific Islander females increased by 10, Hispanic females increased by 5, Asian American/Pacific Islander males increased by 4 and American Indian/Alaska Native males increased by 2.</p> <p>NRCS women and minority recruitment efforts are to be commended, especially with regard to the 29.4 percent increase of the Asian American/Pacific Islander female population. The Hispanic male population increased by 9.9 percent, followed by Asian American/Pacific Islander male population increase of 6.5 percent, the</p>

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Goal	Performance Objective	Indicators	Outcomes
		<p>3.1.2 The Agency: A. identify barriers, and B. take affirmative steps to remove barriers to workforce diversity</p>	<p>Hispanic female population increase of 3.8 percent, the White female population increase of 3.1 percent and the American Indian/Alaska Native population increase of 0.9 percent.</p> <p>In FY 2003, recruitment and retention initiatives of the Natural NRCS and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), relating to women, minorities and individuals with disabilities included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 362 Career Interns continue in the successful NRCS Career Intern Program (CIP); 52 percent are women, minorities, and people with disabilities; projected conversion of 75 percent to permanent positions in the Agency. • Fourteen individuals with disabilities hired, including six students from the Workforce Recruitment Program for college students with disabilities. • In FY 2004, NRCS national presence at six Job fairs resulted in 29 diverse full-time hires. • Over 500 diverse students recruited and employed by NRCS over the summer; 62 percent were women, minorities, and people with disabilities. • Graduating four diverse trainees from NRCS Administrative Trainee Program. They are being placed at the GS-9 grade level in Financial Management, Human Resources Management and Management Services. Will advertise for new trainees fall 2005, including specific outreach to colleges

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			<p>and universities with diverse student populations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five Native American students hired this summer from Washington Internships for Native American Students. • Three Agricultural Interns hired, one converted to career intern. • One Presidential Management Fellow, being converted to permanent full-time. • One female student intern as an Earth Team volunteer. • Use retention allowances, recruitment incentives, student loan repayment, and pay above the minimum step, to attract highly qualified candidates to hard to fill positions in NRCS. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 15 recruitment bonuses; ➤ 2 retention allowances; and ➤ 8 superior qualifications appointments. • Worked with 12 agricultural colleges and universities to recruit highly qualified diverse students to NRCS. • Prepared, for national dissemination, a Calendar of Job Fairs and Recruitment Events, for NRCS Human Resources Officers and Special Emphasis Program Managers; resulted in enhanced diverse recruitment. • Examples of job fairs attended: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Asian American and Pacific Islander Summit; ➤ American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES); ➤ Minorities In Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS);

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ National Hispanic Engineering and Environmental Conference (NHEEC); ➤ Office of Personnel Management (OPM); ➤ Society for Range Management (SRM); and ➤ American Council of the Blind. • Participating in Departmental recruitment initiatives at California Polytechnic and Iowa State Universities. Goal is to increase diversity in the technical and scientific workforce. • Revised "Challenging Careers In NRCS" to make it more attractive to diverse applicants. • New recruitment publications to target diverse populations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ "Employment Opportunities" and ➤ "Recruitment Incentives". ▪ All recruitment and marketing materials reflect NRCS' family friendly workplace. Revised the following policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Student Employment -- enhances how students are treated in NRCS; ➤ NRCS Mentoring Policy -- provides guidelines for establishing mentoring programs; and ➤ Career Intern -- Enables NRCS State Offices to recruit directly for the program. NRCS now leads all USDA agencies in the number of interns. • Through its standardized Student Employment Policy, NRCS state offices recruit and retain student hires and increase outreach to colleges and universities with strong agricultural programs. The goal of this Student Employment Policy is to

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Goal	Performance Objective	Indicators	Outcomes
			<p>attract qualified applicants from underrepresented groups to fill the professional, technical and administrative gaps, expected over the next 5 - 10 years, as identified in the NRCS National Workforce Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRCS hired more than 700 students this summer. 70 percent of these students were women, minorities and people with disabilities. These diverse students included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 6 Asian American/Pacific Islander Females, 7 Asian American/Pacific Islander males; ➤ 80 Black females and 66 Black males; ➤ 20 Hispanic females and 37 Hispanic males; ➤ 10 Native American females and 8 Native American males; ➤ 250 White females ➤ Two Females with Disabilities and two Males with Disabilities. • USDA has also used the Federal Career Intern Program (CIP) to recruit and hire a number of outstanding diverse individuals across the country into entry-level scientific and administrative positions. The CIP provides USDA the capability of hiring outstanding college students and experienced individuals. NRCS leads all other USDA agencies in the recruitment and hiring of career interns. Of the 145 NRCS career interns hired since the program's inception in April of 2002, 73 interns are women or minorities as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Two Disabled Males;

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Two Hispanic Females and six Hispanic Males; ➤ Nine Black Females and Eight Black Males; and ➤ One Asian Female and Two Asian Males; ➤ One Native American Female; and ➤ 42 White females. • In compliance with USDA's Hispanic Employment Plan, NRCS advertised vacancies are open for a period of 30 days and the area of consideration is open to all sources. • The agency placed articles in USDA News, NRCS This Week and the Informer, the USDA Association for People with Disabilities in Agriculture Newsletter, among other publications, on career opportunities in NRCS. • NRCS has a five-year goal to hire 97 individuals with disabilities per year. This is one of the highest disability hiring goals in USDA. Disability recruitment and employment accomplishments include: • Recruiting for the Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities (WRP). NRCS hired four students with disabilities this fiscal year: one Hispanic female, one White female and two White males. • NRCS continues to foster strong working relationships among Disability Employment Program Managers and Human Resources Managers in NRCS offices to accomplish disability-hiring goals. • HRD continued to train regions and states on five-year national goals for hiring individuals with disabilities, in accordance

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			<p>with the Departmental five-year hiring plan and Executive Order 13163.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HRD continues to advise states on recruitment sources and prepared and disseminated guidance on identification of targeted and non-targeted disabilities. HRD recommended colleges and universities with disabled student populations that also have a strong agricultural curriculum. • In support of the Secretary's Advisory Committee for Employees with Disabilities, NRCS is actively involved in implementation of compliance requirements for Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, to make agency Websites accessible for individuals with disabilities. • NRCS wrote and disseminated a Mentoring Policy this year to provide guidance for state offices, nationwide, to use if they establish mentoring programs. NRCS also continues its Administrative and Information Technology Trainee Program. As part of NRCS recruiting effort under this program, the Agency included outreach to women, minorities and individuals with disabilities. NRCS also has on-going relationships with colleges and universities, as well as professional societies, in its continual efforts to market this and other programs. The five diverse trainees in this program include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ One Asian Female ➤ One Hispanic Male ➤ One African-American Female

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		<p>3.1.3 Conduct employee, committee member, and volunteer Civil Rights training to improve awareness,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ One African-American Male and ➤ One White Female. ➤ One of these individuals is also a person with a disability. <p>Human Resources staffs attended and made presentations at recruitment conferences of diverse organizations, including at NRCS employee associations, to brief on recruitment policies and seek qualified diverse applicants. This outreach included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Minorities In Agriculture and Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS); ➤ American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES); ➤ NRCS Professional Hispanic Employees; ➤ NRCS Professional Black Employees; ➤ the American Council of the Blind (ACB) and the Association of Hire Education and Disability (AHEAD); ➤ the National Hispanic Energy and Environmental Conference (NHEEC). <p>NRCS has Special Emphasis Program Managers (SEPMs) and each State has SEPMs and Civil Rights Advisory Councils. Each of these individuals receives annual on-going training and additional periodic training as needed. The work of these SEPMs is coordinated by the NRCS National SEPMs, who provide oversight and guidance on</p>

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		<p>understanding and appreciation for workforce diversity. Training is to include alternative dispute resolution and disability.</p>	<p>Agency priorities, recruitment and retention initiatives.</p> <p>Training is also provided at each national employee association meeting held throughout the year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black Emphasis Program Managers received training at the National NAACP convention in St. Louis, Missouri on December 1, 2003 • Disability Emphasis Program Managers received training in Bethesda, Maryland on December 8, 2003. • Hispanic Emphasis Program Managers received training in Sacramento, California on June 21, 2004. • American Indian/Alaska Native Emphasis Program Managers received training in Verona, New York on July 11, 2004. • The Federal Women Program Managers received training in Nashville, Tennessee on July 20, 2004. • The Asian American/Pacific Islander Emphasis Program Managers received training in Minneapolis, Minnesota on July 26 2004. <p>Civil Rights Division Staff members provided Civil Rights training to Civil Rights Advisory Committees and SEPMs in Massachusetts, South Dakota, and Maine.</p> <p>The NRCS Outreach Division provides updates and key instruction for the orientation for New NRCS Employees, National Employee Development Center (NEDC) training modules on Program Delivery</p>

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			<p>and Compliance, Working Effectively with American Indians and other national special emphasis program managers training sessions with SEPM's.</p> <p>The NRCS Outreach Division staff assisted, supported and participated in all 4 NRCS national employee organization conferences.</p> <p>The NRCS Outreach Division is developing internal and external outreach training based on individual and local needs. Implementation of training will be coordinated with various entities such as the Social Sciences Institutes, (NEDC) and public and private sector training firms. The training plan is 65 percent completed.</p> <p>NRCS provides updates and key instruction for the Orientation for New NRCS Employees, NEDC's training modules on Program Delivery and Compliance, Working Effectively with American Indians and other national special emphasis program.</p> <p>NRCS ADR, Outreach, and Civil Rights briefings were conducted for newly appointed NRCS, Deputy State Conservationist.</p> <p>ADR briefings were conducted at the APIO and Hispanic Special Emphasis Program Conference.</p> <p>Four ADR briefings were conducted at the Florida Appeals Ag</p>

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			<p>Mediation Training in Gainesville, Marianna, Orlando and West Palm Beach, Florida. Over 160 employees attended.</p> <p>ADR briefing was conducted for the South Carolina State Office on the Program appeals process for non-certified states. Sixty-five participants including managers and supervisors attended.</p> <p>NRCS is developing internal and external outreach training based on individual and local needs. Implementation of training will be coordinated with various entities such as the Social Sciences Institutes, NEDC and public and private sector training firms. The training plan is 60 percent completed.</p> <p>The NRCS national Employee Development Center provided the following civil rights training to 952 students in FY 2004:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Civil Rights Compliance in Program Delivery</i> to 285 students • <i>Working Effectively with Alaska Natives</i> to 27 students • <i>Working Effectively with American Indians</i> to 80 students • <i>Consultation with American governments</i> to 35 students • <i>Intro to NRCS (Covers Title VI and Title VII Civil Rights Topics)</i> to 525 students
	3.2 Conduct a	3.2.1 The Agency:	<u>See Section 2 on Program Delivery.</u> NRCS compliance reviews are

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	comprehensive equal employment opportunity (EEO) evaluation program to assess employment policies and practices.	A. takes preventive and corrective actions resulting from compliance reviews, and reports outcomes and actions taken.	<p>conducted jointly to assess the Agency's compliance with both Title VI and Title VII requirements. Eleven States received compliance reviews and 548 field offices were reviewed in FY 2004.</p> <p>NRCS General Manual (GM) 230, Part 405 requires that States submit a corrective action plan to the Civil Rights Staff within 30 working days from the receipt of the Civil Rights Compliance Review. Corrective actions are submitted every 90 days until the action had been satisfied.</p> <p>Section 504 accessibility requirements continue to be the most common violations observed during compliance reviews. However, a majority of the violations were minor and are corrected on-site. States are directed to provide documentation reflecting accessibility violations identified and the need for re-mediation to the lease holders of the offices found to be in noncompliance. The Director CRD and the NHQ DEPM are directing that an accessibility survey be conducted of all NRCS facilities.</p>
	3.3 Manage an effective employment complaint processing program.	3.3.1 The Agency: A. makes good-faith efforts to resolve employment complaints and workplace disputes at all times, early in the process,	<p>The NRCS Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) staff mediates early resolution disputes, informal and formal EEO complaints and grievances.</p> <p>The ADR Program workplace dispute consultations (during the first 3 quarters of FY 2004) continue to increase from FY 2003.</p>

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		<p>B. responds timely to requests for information from EEO counselors, mediators, investigators, and adjudicators, and</p> <p>C. submits EEO counselor's reports timely</p>	<p>All NRCS employees are provided the option to participate in an alternative dispute resolution process such as mediation when they are experiencing workplace conflict.</p> <p>NRCS employees who file an informal EEO complaint and elect ADR are contacted by the ADR office within 2 days of receiving a signed election form from the CRD.</p> <p>Through August 6, 2004, 16 informal EEO complaints were referred to ADR resulting in a higher resolution rate.</p> <p>ADR continues to be instrumental in addressing program disputes. During the first two quarters of FY 2004, 19 program disputes utilized mediation.</p> <p>NRCS ADR published its second quarterly newsletter to NRCS employees. The newsletter was disseminated by the Deputy Chief for Management, to over 11,000 NRCS employees.</p> <p>The NRCS ADR website continues to be updated and accessible for individuals with disabilities.</p>

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		<p>3.3.2 The Agency promptly implements preventive and corrective actions resulting from complaint findings.</p>	<p>Additional ADR brochures have been ordered to disseminate to NRCS employees.</p> <p>ADR continues to offer other forms of ADR to address conflict. Through the use of facilitation, ADR has resolved 7 workplace disputes and has helped small field offices and work teams achieve a higher level of collaboration.</p> <p>NRCS ADR program shares mediators and facilitators with other Federal government agency ADR programs which is a cost saving practice that benefits all USDA agencies.</p> <p>The HRD, CRD and ADR staffs participated in a facilitation to achieve a higher level of collaboration.</p> <p>The CRD Complaints Staff processes Employment Discrimination, Sexual Harassment and Program Participation Complaints. The processing of complaints is handled promptly and efficiently. Presentations are given to employees and managers regarding the EEO process and the importance of communication, employee and management rolls and responsibilities in addition to treating each other with respect. When complaints are filed with the CRD, the EEO Counselors seek resolution at the lowest possible stage. This helps</p>

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		3.3.3 The Agency promptly	<p>management to maintain a hostile free work environment and creates a win/win situation for all parties involved.</p> <p>NRCS achieved a reduction in the number of informal complaints initiated from 85 in FY 2003 to 67 in FY 2004.</p> <p>Since FY 01, there have been 322 informal EEO complaints filed against the Agency. 135 of the complaints were closed through settlement agreements (51), withdrawals (67), and ADR closures (17) as of August 5, 2004, for a total savings to the Agency of from \$6,690,000 to \$13,500,000. EEOC estimates the average cost to process a complaint is somewhere between \$50,000 to \$100,000.</p> <p>The NRCS assumed responsibility for conducting EEO complaint investigations in October of 2003. The agency received 49 complaints from the Department to be investigated. The agency has completed investigations of 29 complaints. Seven investigations were completed within 180 days.</p> <p>The NRCS staff is cogent to time sensitive documents. In most all occasions responses to the Department, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, US Justice Department etc, are responded to in the timeframe allotted.</p> <p>NRCS has developed policy and procedures outlining guidelines to follow pertaining to EEOC's findings of discrimination. If there is a</p>

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		<p>implements terms of settlement agreements.</p> <p>3.3.4 The Agency analyzes trends in complaints; promptly implementing changes in policies and practices to avoid future complaints and ensure nondiscrimination.</p>	<p>finding of discrimination by the EEOC, the NRCS will carryout its procedures immediately.</p> <p>NRCS CRD has provided ongoing direction and oversight to ensure the fulfillment of negotiated settlement agreements. All settlement agreements were completed within the negotiated timeframes established in the settlements.</p> <p>NRCS conducts analysis of the complaint databases in efforts to decrease patterns and practices of discrimination. The analysis is used by management to increase employees' awareness and to eliminate potential barriers.</p> <p>NRCS developed a Civil Rights Newsletter to be disseminated through the agency to keep managers and employees informed of the latest information pertaining to the Civil Rights and the EEO arena.</p>
4 <u>Procurement.</u> Ensure equal opportunity for minority, women-owned and small and disadvantaged	4.1 Take affirmative steps to increase procurement with minority, women-owned, and small and disadvantaged businesses.	4.1.1 The Agency develops and implements effective strategies for improving participation by minority, women-owned, and small and disadvantaged	<p>The FY 2004 budget was not released until May 2004. Therefore, the issuance of contracts was delayed slightly until NRCS funds were approved. Fourth quarter totals in FY 2003 will reflect an increase in contracts and funds expended. Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act (JWOD) figures will be reflected in the JWOD Performance Plan for NRCS. The following depicts the total procurements for FY2004 (as of third</p>

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businesses in all USDA contracting activities.		<p>businesses.</p> <p>4.1.2 The Agency: X identifies barriers to participation by minority, women-owned, and small and disadvantaged businesses, X takes affirmative steps with the authority of the Agency to remove these barriers, and X takes affirmative steps to increase employment of persons with disabilities by procuring goods and services under the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act.</p>	<p>quarter).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small Business - \$20,140,970 • 8(a) – \$4,335,825 • Small Disadvantaged Business - \$930,795 • Woman-Owned Business – 1,712,784 • HUBZone - \$1,634,689 • Veterans - \$653,047 <p>Total NRCS projected Procurements - \$110M The 2002 Farm Bill expanded the availability of technical assistance to producers by encouraging the use of third parties—called technical service providers—to assist USDA in delivering conservation technical services to farmers and ranchers.</p> <p>Technical Service Provider Registry (TechReg), a new NRCS Internet application, will be available. TechReg makes it easy for technical service providers (TSPs) to register and become certified, and for USDA customers to find certified providers. TechReg provides a TSP locator, information about certification categories and criteria, on-line certification, and TSP progress reporting. The TechReg database already contains over 15,000 prospective TSPs. TSP's who register and become certified must also adhere to the Civil Rights laws, regulations, and procedures governing Title VI.</p>

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			<p>NRCS released “not to exceed” payment rates for certified technical service providers. These rates were established for each State using NRCS’ Technical Assistance Cost of Conservation Practices (TACCP) database, which reflects the agency’s total cost to provide technical assistance for conservation practices. These payments rates will be provided to USDA conservation program participants to help them choose competitively-priced services from these providers.</p> <p>The rates were established using NRCS’ TACCP database, which reflects the agency’s total cost to provide technical assistance for conservation practices. TACCP uses cost information of sub-state areas, which reflect common natural resource, regulatory, geographic, social and economic factors. These factors affect the time needed to plan and implement conservation practices.</p> <p>Barriers of awarding contracts to minorities, woman-owned, and small disadvantaged businesses include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Businesses do not always employ experienced personnel for their staff and must continuously recruit skilled personnel in order to perform the work of the contract; • Businesses must be in a position to obtain bonding; and • Contractors may lack the skills to market themselves to other government agencies. NRCS has designed training to enhance

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			<p>their skills in obtaining and retaining an experienced staff and understanding good business practices.</p> <p>NRCS attends monthly vendor outreach meetings conducted to communicate how to do business with NRCS.</p> <p>Contracting officers are continuously encouraged to utilize small business concerns whenever possible. In addition, they provide instructions to the Local Agency Program Coordinators for the Purchase Card Management System to train cardholders on Small Business Program policies, regulations, and procedures.</p> <p>Training ensures that cardholders and contracting officers are aware of the impact of Federal procurement on small business concerns.</p>

